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MCCLELLAN'S LAST SERVICE TO THE REPUBLIC.

PART I.

A FULL history of General McClellan's services to the country, from the time when he led the Army of the Potomac to a position of safety on the James River at Harrison's Landing, to the transfer of that army to General Pope's command, and thence to the battle of Antietam, has never been written. In that part of McClellan's official report which covers this period, there is hardly more than a skeleton of events, made up of dispatches and letters, connected by a thread of narrative, in which the personal interviews, the oral communications, the anecdotes, and the acts of individuals, are for the most part wanting. That singularly dramatic scene, which witnessed the withdrawal of McClellan's army from the James, the defeat and disorderly retreat of Pope, McClellan's resumption of the command at the sudden and unexpected request of President Lincoln, his restoration of order, his provisions for the safety of Washington, his march into northern Maryland, his repulse of Lee, his advance into Virginia, and his recall at the moment when his preparations had been so made that nothing could probably have stayed his entrance into Richmond, is now to be described. It is understood that this journal opens its pages for the purposes of history, among others. It is only for the sake of making a contribution to history that we write. Of the four principal actors in this remarkable drama, Lincoln, Stanton, Halleck, and McClellan, the last

alone survives. In what we shall say of the conduct of each of the three others toward the General who saved the capital, we may present to our readers unexpected explanations of many things which they have been accustomed to view differently, or which have remained hitherto in obscurity. They will understand, however, that we do not speak at random, and that we do not ask for their belief without having had ample means for forming our own.

The present narrative will commence at the point of time when General McClellan delivered personally into the hands of President Lincoln a letter on the general subject of the war, which has long been public, and which has been the subject of much criticism. The true history of that letter we are able to give. While General McClellan was encamped on the Chickahominy, in June, 1862, awaiting the reënforcements which he so much needed for his advance on Richmond, he said in a telegraphic dispatch to the President, relating to other matters, "I would be glad to lay before your Excellency, by letter or telegraph, my views as to the present state of military affairs throughout the whole country." The President answered on the next day, as follows: "If it would not divert too much of your time and attention from the army under your immediate command, I would be glad to have your views as to the present state of military affairs throughout the country, as you say you would be glad to give them. I would rather it should be by letter than by telegraph, because of the better chance of secrecy." To this General McClellan replied that under the circumstances he would defer for the present the communication he desired to make. It was, however, only deferred. General McClellan felt that what he desired to say to the President was too important to be forborne, but he postponed the preparation of his letter until a more convenient time.

On the 25th of June, McClellan, closely pressed by the enemy, whose force amounted, according to his best information, to two hundred thousand men, telegraphed to Stanton, the Secretary of War, as follows:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
CAMP LINCOLN, *June 25, 1862—6.15 P. M.*

I have just returned from the field, and found your dispatch in regard to Jackson.

Several contrabands, just in, give information confirming supposition that Jackson's advance is at or near Hanover Court-House, and that Beauregard arrived, with strong reënforcements, in Richmond yesterday.

I incline to think that Jackson will attack my right and rear. The rebel

force is stated at (200,000) two hundred thousand, including Jackson and Beauregard. I shall have to contend against vastly superior odds if these reports be true. But this army will do all in the power of men to hold their position and repulse any attack.

I regret my great inferiority in numbers, but feel that I am in no way responsible for it, as I have not failed to represent, repeatedly, the necessity of reënforcements; that this was the decisive point, and that all the available means of the Government should be concentrated here. I will do all that a General can do, with the splendid army I have the honor to command, and, if it is destroyed by overwhelming numbers, can at least die with it, and share its fate.

But, if the result of the action which will probably occur to-morrow, or within a short time, is a disaster, the responsibility can not be thrown on my shoulders; it must rest where it belongs.

Since I commenced this, I have received additional intelligence, confirming the supposition in regard to Jackson's movements and Beauregard's arrival. I shall probably be attacked to-morrow, and now go to the other side of the Chickahominy, to arrange for the defense on that side. I feel that there is no use in my again asking for reënforcements.

G. B. McCLELLAN, *Major-General*.

EDWIN M. STANTON, *Secretary of War*.

On the 26th, the day upon which McClellan had fixed for his final advance, although the reënforcements which he had so earnestly and repeatedly called for had been withheld from him, he was attacked by the enemy in strong force on his right. He was thus compelled to turn his attention to the protection of his communications and depots of supply. "This," he says in his report, "was a bitter confirmation of the military judgment which had been reiterated to my military superiors from the inception and through the progress of the Peninsular campaign." Then followed THE SEVEN DAYS, through which he fought his way for a change of base to the James River, in a series of desperate conflicts, in every one of which the Confederates were baffled, until, on the night of the 3d of July, the last of the wagon-trains reached the new base at Harrison's Landing, and the wearied Army of the Potomac, which had battled with such heroic endurance under his skillful guidance, rested in security, protected by their own batteries and the gunboats which lay in the river. The three following days were occupied by McClellan in strengthening and guarding his position, and in a fruitless telegraphic correspondence with the President, to convince the latter that reënforcements ought to be sent to him, so that he could advance on Richmond from the James. "To reënforce you," said Mr. Lincoln, "so as to enable you to resume the offensive within a

month, or even six weeks, is impossible. . . . Under these circumstances, the defensive, for the present, must be your only care. Save the army, first, where you are, if you can ; and, secondly, by removal, if you must."

While the Army of the Potomac was thus resting in the defensive at Harrison's Landing, General McClellan wrote to the President, on the 7th of July, the letter which he had obtained permission to write. It is but fair to take his own account of the motives which actuated him in making this communication to the President. "While General-in-Chief," he said in his report, "and directing the operations of all our armies in the field, I had become deeply impressed with the importance of adopting and carrying out certain views regarding the conduct of the war, which, in my judgment, were essential to its objects and success. During an active campaign of three months in the enemy's country, these were so fully confirmed that I conceived it a duty, in the critical position we then occupied, not to withhold a candid expression of the more important of these views from the Commander-in-Chief whom the Constitution places at the head of the armies and navies, as well as of the Government of the nation." This letter, conceived in this spirit and privately delivered into the President's own hands, is the one that has been so long misrepresented as a political manifesto of General McClellan, intended to promote his personal prospects for the next Presidency.

The letter having been completed and signed, General McClellan was about to intrust it to the hands of General Marcy, his chief of staff, who was going to Washington, for delivery to the President, when intelligence was unexpectedly received that the President was coming down to Harrison's Landing. He arrived on or about the 8th of July. General McClellan went on board the steamer to receive the President, and, after they had been together for a short time in the cabin, McClellan placed his letter in the President's hands. Mr. Lincoln read it through, folded it up, and, with no comment save the two words "All right," put it in his pocket. He remained at Harrison's Landing for forty-eight hours, in constant intercourse with McClellan of the most confidential nature, and never once alluded to this letter with either commendation, criticism, censure, or complaint.* How this letter, never intended for publication as

* While Mr. Lincoln was on shore at Harrison's Landing, the soldiers exhibited no disposition to cheer him. In fact, the rank and file of the army received him very coldly. General McClellan caused the men to be told that the President should be cheered;

its context shows, came long afterward to be given to the press is not known. It was not done by General McClellan, or by his permission.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
CAMP NEAR HARRISON'S LANDING, VIRGINIA, *July 7, 1862.*

MR. PRESIDENT: You have been duly informed that the rebel army is in our front, with the purpose of overwhelming us by attacking our positions, or reducing us by blocking our river communications. I can not but regard our condition as critical; and I earnestly desire, in view of possible contingencies, to lay before your Excellency, for your private consideration, my general views concerning the existing state of the rebellion, although they do not strictly relate to the situation of this army, or strictly come within the scope of my official duties. These views amount to convictions, and are deeply impressed on my mind and heart. Our cause must never be abandoned; it is the cause of free institutions and self-government. The Constitution and the Union must be preserved, whatever may be the cost in time, treasure, and blood. If secession is successful, other dissolutions are clearly to be seen in the future. Let neither military disaster, political faction, nor foreign war shake your settled purpose to enforce the equal operation of the laws of the United States upon the people of every State.

The time has come when the Government must determine upon a civil and military policy covering the whole ground of our national trouble. The responsibility of determining, declaring, and supporting such civil and military policy, and of directing the whole course of national affairs in regard to the rebellion, must now be assumed and exercised by you, or our cause will be lost. The Constitution gives you power sufficient even for the present terrible exigency.

This rebellion has assumed the character of a war; as such it should be regarded, and it should be conducted upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization. It should not be a war looking to the subjugation of the people of any State, in any event. It should not be at all a war upon populations, but against armed forces and political organizations. Neither confiscation of property, political executions of persons, territorial organization of States, nor forcible abolition of slavery should be contemplated for a moment. In prosecuting the war, all private property and unarmed persons should be strictly protected, subject only to the necessity of military operations. All private property taken for military use should be paid or receipted for; pillage and waste should be treated as high crimes; all unnecessary trespass sternly prohibited, and offensive demeanor by the military toward citizens promptly rebuked. Military arrests should not be tolerated, except in places where active hostilities exist, and oaths not required by enactments constitutionally made should be neither demanded nor received. Military

and then he was cheered, but not with the slightest enthusiasm. The men felt too deeply that the Government had left them to encounter terrible perils, without proper support; and they also felt that, after all their exertions and endurance, they ought to be reënforced and allowed to resume the offensive for which they ardently longed.

government should be confined to the preservation of public order and the protection of political rights. Military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude, either by supporting or impairing the authority of the master, except for repressing disorder, as in other cases. Slaves contraband under the act of Congress, seeking military protection, should receive it. The right of the Government to appropriate permanently to its own service claims to slave-labor, should be asserted, and the right of the owner to compensation therefor should be recognized.

This principle might be extended, upon grounds of military necessity and security, to all the slaves within a particular State, thus working manumission in such State; and in Missouri, perhaps in Western Virginia also, and possibly even in Maryland, the expediency of such a measure is only a question of time.

A system of policy thus constitutional and conservative, and pervaded by the influences of Christianity and freedom, would receive the support of almost all truly loyal men, would deeply impress the rebel masses and all foreign nations, and it might be humbly hoped that it would commend itself to the favor of the Almighty.

Unless the principles governing the future conduct of our struggle shall be made known and approved, the effort to obtain requisite forces will be almost hopeless. A declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies.

The policy of the Government must be supported by concentrations of military power. The national forces should not be dispersed in expeditions, posts of occupation, and numerous armies, but should be mainly collected into masses, and brought to bear upon the armies of the Confederate States. Those armies thoroughly defeated, the political structure which they support would soon cease to exist.

In carrying out any system of policy which you may form, you will require a Commander-in-Chief of the army—one who possesses your confidence, understands your views, and who is competent to execute your orders by directing the military forces of the nation to the accomplishment of the objects by you proposed. I do not ask that place for myself. I am willing to serve you in such position as you may assign me, and I will do so as faithfully as ever subordinate served superior.

I may be on the brink of eternity, and, as I hope for forgiveness from my Maker, I have written this letter with sincerity toward you, and from love for my country.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. B. McCLELLAN.

His Excellency A. LINCOLN, President.

The President returned to Washington, carrying with him General McClellan's letter, on or about the 10th of July, undecided as to the future military operations. The dispatches which followed his return are very important. On the 12th McClellan

telegraphed to him: "I am more and more convinced that this army ought not to be withdrawn from here, but promptly reënforced and thrown again upon Richmond. If we have little more than half a chance, we can take it. I dread the effects of any retreat upon the *morale* of my men." Again, on the 17th he telegraphed to the President: "I have consulted fully with General Burnside, and would commend to your favorable consideration the General's plan for bringing seven additional regiments from North Carolina, by leaving Newbern to the care of the gunboats. It appears manifestly to be our policy to concentrate here everything we can possibly spare from less important points, to make sure of crushing the enemy at Richmond, which seems clearly to be the most important point in rebeldom. Nothing should be left to chance here. I would recommend that General Burnside, with all his troops, be ordered to this army, to enable it to assume the offensive as soon as possible." On the 18th he repeated this advice, adding: "Am anxious to have determination of Government, that no time may be lost in preparing for it. Hours are very precious now, and perfect unity of action necessary."

Ten days passed away, and still no decision had been made at Washington. On the 28th McClellan telegraphed to Halleck, the General-in-Chief: "My opinion is more and more firm that here is the defense of Washington, and that I should be reënforced at once by all available troops, to enable me to advance. Retreat would be disastrous to the army and the cause. I am confident of that." On the 30th he again telegraphed to Halleck: "I hope it may soon be decided what is to be done by this army; and that the decision may be to reënforce it at once. We are losing much valuable time, and that at a moment when energy and decision are sadly needed."

We must pause here to explain that, at the time of this indecision on the part of the Government, the question was whether the enemy should be attacked by McClellan advancing on Richmond, and be thereby confined to the defense of *his* capital, or whether he should be allowed to advance on Washington by way of Fredericksburg, thus compelling the Federal Government to defend *their* capital. As a military question, considering the comparative advantages of attack and defense; and the dangers that would follow from a defeat of the Federal forces in the front of Washington, there was not much room for doubt. If McClellan were to be reënforced and ordered to attack Richmond, the troops of the Confederates would have to be concentrated for its defense. If Mc-

Clellan had been defeated in this attempt, his defeat must have cost the enemy so much that he could hardly have been in a condition to seriously menace Washington before a sufficient force could have been interposed for its defense. McClellan, be it observed, did not ask for all the forces that were at the disposal of his Government; he asked for all that were "available," which he explained to mean "everything that we can possibly spare from less important points"—a meaning that the military authorities in Washington must have understood. On the other hand, if McClellan's army were to be withdrawn from the James, the enemy would be practically invited to advance on Washington; and, if he should defeat the Federal armies gathered in front of that capital, it would be in a great peril. A vast deal, too, would depend upon the commander who was to be intrusted with the defense of Washington, in case the Army of the Potomac should be withdrawn from the James, thus encouraging the enemy to stake his utmost efforts upon a great battle, or a series of battles, in front of the Federal capital. At the time when this momentous decision was to be made by our Government, they contemplated a reliance upon General Pope to encounter General Lee; and to encounter Lee, not after he had been crippled by a previous contest with McClellan, but in the full strength which would remain to him without that contest. It is impossible, therefore, to read McClellan's dispatches at this period of the President's indecision, without being impressed by the conviction that McClellan was right in his military judgment, even if we do not look forward to what actually followed. The elements for a sound determination were as patent to the authorities in Washington, between the 10th of July and the 6th of August, as they were to McClellan. But, unfortunately, other counsels prevailed over his.

Between the 30th of July and the 3d of August the enemy made some attempts to feel McClellan's position, by demonstrations with light batteries, but they were driven back toward Petersburg, and Coggin's Point, on the south side of the James, was occupied on the same day by McClellan, and fortified. On that day also he sent forward a force of cavalry on the south side of the river, which drove back a body of five hundred of the enemy's cavalry in confusion. His whole position on the James was now therefore secure, and he was in a condition to advance, if he could have Burnside, whom he again asked for on the 2d of August. "Give me Burnside," he telegraphed to Halleck, "and I will stir these people up."

On the 30th of July the Government was apparently still undecided, but, from the tenor of Halleck's dispatches of that day and the next, McClellan had some reason to expect orders to advance on Richmond. Thus on the 30th Halleck sent two dispatches. The first said: "A dispatch just received from General Pope says that deserters report that the enemy is moving south of James River, and that the force in Richmond is very small. I suggest that he be pressed in that direction, so as to ascertain the facts of the case." But again, on the 30th, Halleck telegraphed, rather ambiguously: "In order to enable you to move in any direction, it is necessary to relieve you of your sick. The Surgeon-General has therefore been directed to make arrangements for them at other places, and the Quartermaster-General to provide transportation. I hope you will send them away as quickly as possible, and advise me of their removal." And, on the 31st, Halleck telegraphed, "General Pope again telegraphs that the enemy is reported to be evacuating Richmond, and falling back on Danville and Lynchburg." These were the only data McClellan then had, from which to form an opinion as to the intentions of the Government. They had, in fact, at this time, no fixed intentions, but the dispatches looked as if McClellan might be allowed to advance.

On the 4th of August, General Hooker, by General McClellan's orders, advanced with a large force to Malvern Hill, a strong position of the Confederates fourteen and three quarter miles distant from Richmond, and drove the forces of the enemy back toward New Market. Malvern Hill controlled the direct approach to Richmond: It was equally necessary to occupy it, for a time, whether Richmond was to be attacked by McClellan from the James, or whether he was to be ordered to abandon the Peninsula. On the 5th McClellan was himself at Malvern Hill, and thence he telegraphed to Halleck at 1 p. m.: "This is a very advantageous position to cover an advance on Richmond, and only fourteen and three quarter miles distant, and I feel confident that, with reënforcements, I could march this army there in five days." To this there came the answer from Halleck, on the 6th, "I have no reënforcements to send you."

The correspondence at this time shows the utmost impatience on the part of Halleck and the utmost exertions of McClellan to comply with his orders. By day and by night McClellan carried on his operations for the removal of the sick by all the means of transportation at his command. On the subject of the withdrawal

of the army, it is necessary to follow this correspondence carefully. The determination of the Government to withdraw the army from the Peninsula was made known by a telegram which Halleck sent on the 3d and which McClellan received on the 4th. In this dispatch Halleck said : " You will take immediate measures to effect this, covering the movement the best you can. Its real object and withdrawal should be concealed even from your own officers. Your *matériel* and transportation should be removed first. You will assume control of all the means of transportation within your reach, and apply to the naval forces for all the assistance they can render you. . . . The entire execution of the movement is left to your discretion."

" I proceeded," says McClellan, " to obey this order with all possible rapidity, firmly impressed, however, with the conviction that the withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac from Harrison's Landing, where its communications had, by the coöperation of the gunboats, been rendered perfectly secure, would at that time have the most disastrous effect upon our cause. I did not, as the commander of that army, allow the occasion to pass without distinctly setting forth my views upon the subject to the authorities." The very impressive dispatch in which McClellan, on the 4th, placed before the General-in-Chief the whole of the military argument against the order for the removal of his army is too lengthy to be quoted in full, but it was remarkable for the cogency of its reasoning and the simple earnestness of its tone. It reads now like prophecy, but like the prophecy of one who was too sincerely anxious for the success of the cause to be gratified in the end by the fulfillment of his predictions. Yet he did not refrain, as a patriot should not have refrained, from letting the Government understand plainly what he plainly foresaw. " Your telegram of last evening," he said to Halleck, " is received. I must confess that it has caused me the greatest pain I ever experienced, for I am convinced that the order to withdraw this army to Aquia Creek will prove disastrous to our cause. I fear it will be a fatal blow. Several days are necessary to complete the preparations for so important a movement as this, and while they are in progress I beg that careful consideration may be given to my statements." He then enters into the argument, showing that, with his army then in excellent discipline and condition, he was only twenty-five miles from Richmond, and that the gunboats could supply the army by water during its advance to within twelve miles of that capital, whereas the result of the retrograde movement

that had been ordered would be a march of one hundred and forty-five miles to reach the same point, and without the aid of the gun-boats and water transportation.* He then concludes as follows :

Add to this the certain demoralization of this army which would ensue, the terribly depressing effect upon the people of the North, and the strong probability that it would influence foreign powers to recognize our adversaries, and there appear to me sufficient reasons to make it my imperative duty to urge, in the strongest terms afforded by our language, that this order may be rescinded, and that, far from recalling this army, it be promptly reënforced to enable it to assume the offensive.

It may be said that there are no reënforcements available. I point to Burnside's force; to that of Pope, not necessary to maintain a strict defensive in front of Washington and Harper's Ferry; to those portions of the Army of the West not required for a strict defensive there. Here, directly in front of this army, is the heart of the rebellion; it is here that all our resources should be collected to strike the blow which will determine the fate of the nation. All points of secondary importance elsewhere should be abandoned, and every available man brought here. A decided victory here, and the military strength of the rebellion is crushed; it matters not what partial reverses we may meet with elsewhere. Here is the true defense of Washington; it is here, on the banks of the James, that the fate of the Union should be decided.

Clear in my convictions of right, strong in the consciousness that I have ever been, and still am, actuated solely by love of my country, knowing that no ambitious or selfish motives have influenced me from the commencement of this war, I do now, what I never did in my life before—I entreat that this order may be rescinded.

If my counsel does not prevail, I will with a sad heart obey your orders to the utmost of my power, directing to the movement, which I clearly foresee will be one of the utmost delicacy and difficulty, whatever skill I may possess.

Whatever the result may be, and may God grant that I am mistaken in my forebodings, I shall at least have the internal satisfaction that I have written and spoken frankly, and have sought to do the best in my power to avert disaster from my country.

GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, *Major-General commanding.*

The answer of General Halleck was at first communicated by telegram, on the 5th, saying that the order would not be rescinded, and that it must be executed with all possible promptness. He promised, however, to reply more fully by mail; and on the 6th he

* Aquia Creek would be seventy-five miles from Richmond, with only land transportation all the way. From Harrison's Landing to Fortress Monroe would be a land march of seventy miles.

wrote to McClellan a long letter, which set forth in detail the opposite argument and the reasons for the decision which had been made. Without meaning to detract in any degree from the earnestness of General Halleck's convictions, and conceding that he had a difficult military predicament to deal with, in consequence of the division of the Federal forces and the opportunity for the enemy to fall upon McClellan or upon Pope, at his pleasure—a difficulty which General Halleck did not create—there is still one question that remains to be considered, and in reference to which the Government must be held to have made a fatal mistake.* When it had been determined to mass the Federal armies in front of Washington, the question of a commander, who was to be intrusted with the defense of Washington and with the advance upon Richmond, if haply a new advance of the united armies should prove to be practicable, was certainly one of the last importance. Why was not this command given to McClellan? This question may be asked, and it must be answered, without reference to any wishes that he may be supposed to have had on the subject. We do not know that he had any. But we do know, that when a government has a military command of the utmost importance to bestow, it will, if it is swayed by the only motives that are fit to govern it, select, of its own unprompted and unbiased accord, the General who is most fit for the exigency. It may be said with perfect truth that McClellan, at the moment when it was determined to concentrate both the Army of Virginia and the Army of the Potomac in front of Washington, was the only General within the reach of the Government who was qualified to take such a command.

From the President down, through the various ranks of politicians or soldiers by whom he was surrounded, all knew in their hearts that the only reason why McClellan had failed to reach Richmond, and been obliged to execute his flank movement to the James, was because McDowell had been arrested by express orders from Washington on his march to effect a junction with McClellan's right. Everybody knew that McClellan had handled his army with consummate skill, on that flank movement, and had saved it from a vastly superior force of the enemy; that under him that army had fought, on their perilous march, with almost unexampled bravery,

* It is almost too plain to require suggestion that if, on the one hand, the Confederates could fall upon McClellan and upon Pope separately, so also it was equally in the power of the Federal Government to divide and attack the Confederates, in separate masses, by ordering McClellan and Pope both to push toward Richmond.

preserving their discipline, and never once breaking into disorderly retreat, thus winning for their commander and themselves the applause and admiration of the most competent military judges at home and abroad. These were the patent facts that were before Mr. Lincoln and his advisers, in regard to McClellan's Peninsular campaign. Previous to that campaign, they knew what he had achieved in the West, before he was called to Washington, and what he had done after he came to the capital, in creating, organizing, and disciplining the best army that the United States had hitherto ever had. In addition to all this, the Government at Washington had before them the very important fact that there was no general in their service who could inspire officers and men with such an attachment to his person, and such devotion to the cause for which they fought, as McClellan could, and always had from the first. They knew him also to be unselfish, never waiting for arrangements that would promote his own ambition, never making any conditions but such as the good of the service demanded. Yet McClellan was not asked to take this command.

Why was this? Must this question be answered by the suggestion that McClellan had written a letter to the President which had displeased him? It must be remembered that, at the time of which we are now speaking, the Harrison's Landing letter had not been made public, and that it could have been seen only by the few persons in Washington to whom Mr. Lincoln may have shown it. As will hereafter appear, there was at least one member of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet who knew nothing of the existence of this letter until the following winter. This gentleman, the Hon. Montgomery Blair, was, although not intimate with General McClellan, one of his steadiest supporters. It is probable, too, that Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State, who was always understood to hold General McClellan's military capacity and his patriotism in the highest estimation, knew nothing of this letter at this time. But there were other members of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet, especially Mr. Chase and Mr. Stanton, who were exceedingly hostile to McClellan, to whom the President undoubtedly did show this letter, soon after he received it. If we are to conclude that Mr. Lincoln was personally displeased with General McClellan because he had written to him a private letter recommending a certain policy in the prosecution of the war, and that this was the reason why the command of the combined armies was not offered to McClellan, we are irresistibly forced to the conclusion that Mr. Lincoln allowed his personal feelings to prevent

him from availing himself and the country of the services of a general, in comparison with whom General Pope was not to be named in the same century. On the other hand, it is impossible to regard McClellan's earnest advice, that the Army of the Potomac be permitted to remain at Harrison's Landing and be reënforced for a new advance on Richmond, as any solid reason for not offering to him the command of the combined forces when it had been determined to withdraw that army from the Peninsula. Everybody, the President included, knew that McClellan always did his whole duty, whoever shaped the campaigns, or however contrary the military policy of the Government might be to the dictates of his own judgment.

One thing, however, will be found to be true, as we proceed, namely, that there was a malign influence in the President's counsels, which had always been adverse to McClellan. We believe that Mr. Lincoln himself was not indisposed to place a very high degree of confidence in General McClellan's military ability and his patriotic devotion to the cause of the Union; but, having allowed some of McClellan's bitterest enemies to see the private letter which McClellan had written to him, Mr. Lincoln put it in their power to do McClellan great injury. Ample as were Mr. Lincoln's opportunities for knowing McClellan, we do not think that he ever appreciated the straightforward sincerity and guilelessness of McClellan's nature. The two men were very unlike. The moral qualities which won the admiration and confidence of other men, and which were in so marked a degree united in McClellan with rare military abilities, we believe were not understood by President Lincoln. But we are not at all disposed to adopt the theory that the Harrison's Landing letter gave Mr. Lincoln any personal offense; and, while we believe that he did not wish to do General McClellan injustice, we feel bound to relate the facts as they occurred, and to give them all the bearing which they should have upon a theory which has been suggested respecting the removal of McClellan from the command of the army after the battle of Antietam.

General McClellan remained at Harrison's Landing until the 16th of August, superintending and providing for the removal of his army, with its immense trains and equipage. On the afternoon of that day, everything being arranged for the departure of the different corps, he left with an escort, and overtook the troops that were marching toward Fortress Monroe. He passed the column, and arrived at that post on the 19th. On the 23d he proceeded with his staff to Aquia Creek, where he arrived at day-

break on the 24th. Thence he telegraphed to Halleck the position of his troops, adding : " Please inform me immediately exactly where Pope is, and what doing. Until I know that I can not regulate Porter's movements ; he is much exposed now, and decided measures should be taken at once. Until I know what my command and position are to be, and whether you intend to place me in the command indicated in your first letter to me, and orally through General Burnside at the Chickahominy, I can not decide where I can be of most use. If your determination is unchanged, I ought to go to Alexandria at once. Please define my position and duties." Halleck replied on the same day that he did not know where Pope was, or where the enemy in force was ; he said nothing about McClellan's future position. But on the 26th he telegraphed to McClellan, " Perhaps you had better leave General Burnside in charge at Aquia Creek, and come to Alexandria, as very great irregularities are reported there." On the 27th, therefore, McClellan sailed for Alexandria. He left his cavalry escort at Fredericksburg, for General Burnside. Every part of the army which he had lately commanded went forward to be under Pope's command. McClellan took with him nothing but his personal staff, a few orderlies, and the infantry guard of his headquarters, about five hundred men all told. He encamped with these at Alexandria, in a field near the river, about half a mile above the town, and reported for orders. There he was employed in forwarding troops and ammunition to Pope until the 30th. On the morning of that day, heavy artillery-firing was heard in the direction of Fairfax Court-House. In the afternoon, McClellan telegraphed in answer to Halleck : " I have no sharp-shooters except the guard around my camp. I have sent off every man but these, and will now send them as you direct. I will also send my only remaining squadron of cavalry [now] with General Sumner. I can do no more. You now have every man of the Army of the Potomac who is within my reach."

Seated in his tent, with nothing more that he could do, McClellan was left by the Government to listen to the ominous preliminary sounds of the great battle that was then commencing, separated from the troops who had loved and obeyed him with almost unparalleled devotion, and who now terribly needed his guiding hand and his inspiring presence. It needs no words of ours to figure to the reader the situation of this faithful officer. As in all the great trials of his life, so now in this, perhaps the greatest to which he was ever subjected, his own feelings, expressed with his habitual

frankness, are the best guide to his character. At half-past ten o'clock of that evening (30th of August) he telegraphed to Halleck as follows :

CAMP NEAR ALEXANDRIA, August 30, 1862—10.30 P. M.

I have sent to the front all my troops with the exception of Couch's division, and have given the orders necessary to insure its being disposed of as you directed. I hourly expect the return of one of my aides, who will give authentic news from the field of battle.

I can not express to you the pain and mortification I have experienced to-day in listening to the distant sound of the firing of my men. As I can be of no further use here, I respectfully ask that, if there is a probability of the conflict being renewed to-morrow, I may be permitted to go to the scene of battle with my staff, merely to be with my own men, if nothing more ; they will fight none the worse for my being with them. If it is not deemed best to intrust me with the command even of my own army, I simply ask to be permitted to share their fate on the field of battle. Please reply to this to-night.

I have been engaged for the last few hours in doing what I can to make arrangements for the wounded. I have started out all the ambulances now landed. As I have sent my escort to the front, I would be glad to take some of Gregg's cavalry with me, if allowed to go.

G. B. McCLELLAN, *Major-General*.

To this earnest appeal to be permitted to share the fate of his own men, there came tardily on the next morning from Halleck the cold reply, "I can not answer without seeing the President, as General Pope is in command by his order of the department." Not one word of recognition of McClellan's patriotic and noble offer graced the dispatch of the General-in-Chief. On the next day, the 31st, Halleck sent the following dispatch, dated at 10.7 P. M. : "Since receiving your dispatch relating to command, I have not been able to answer any not of absolute necessity. I have not seen the order as published, but will write to you in the morning. You will retain the command of everything in this vicinity not temporarily to be Pope's army in the field. I beg of you to assist me in this crisis with your ability and experience. I am entirely tired out."

The "order" referred to in this dispatch was one that emanated on the previous day from the War Department, by direction of Secretary Stanton, who now thought it well to utter a sneer at McClellan, while defining the commands of the different generals. The order read as follows :

WAR DEPARTMENT, *August 30, 1862.*

The following are the commanders of the armies operating in Virginia :

General Burnside commands his own corps, except those that have been temporarily detached and assigned to General Pope.

General McClellan commands that portion of the Army of the Potomac that has not been sent forward to General Pope's command.

General Pope commands the Army of Virginia, and all the forces temporarily attached to it.

All the forces are under the command of Major-General Halleck, General-in-Chief.

E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General.*

We have italicized the sting of this order, as most persons who read it at the time italicized it in their own minds. The whole country knew that everything had been taken from McClellan's late command and sent forward to Pope ; but the public knew nothing of McClellan's earnest entreaty to be sent into the field in any capacity in which he could be of use. Mr. Stanton saw fit, therefore, to say to the people of the Union, " We have shelved McClellan, and, as he sits there in his tent at Alexandria with a body-guard of a hundred wounded men, you can look at him if you like." But, in a few short and disastrous hours, the eyes of all men were turned toward the General who could not be permitted to risk his life on the battle-field, in leading even a brigade or a regiment, because General Pope was in command.

On the morning of the 1st of September, McClellan, appealed to by Halleck for assistance, rode into Washington and went directly to Halleck's office. He told Halleck that Pope had been beaten. Halleck did not credit it. McClellan then told him that he ought to go out and see for himself. Halleck answered that he was too busy to go. " How can the General-in-Chief," said McClellan, " have more important business than to ascertain the condition of the army that is so near ? " Finally, Halleck said he would send his Assistant Adjutant-General, Colonel Kelton. McClellan advised Kelton to see the general officers and learn the exact state of things. On the same afternoon, McClellan, at the urgent request of Halleck, met the President at Halleck's house. The President expressed a fear that the Army of the Potomac was not cheerfully coöperating with and supporting General Pope ; that he (Mr. Lincoln) " had always been a friend " of McClellan, and he now asked, as a special favor, that McClellan would use his influence in correcting this state of things. McClellan assured the President that his fears were groundless. Mr. Lincoln was much moved, and he again requested Mc-

Clellan to telegraph to "Fitz John Porter or some other of his friends," and try to do away with any feeling that might exist, adding that no one but McClellan could rectify this evil. "I thereupon told him," says McClellan, "that I would cheerfully telegraph to General Porter, or do anything else in my power, to gratify his wishes and relieve his anxiety; upon which he thanked me very warmly, assured me that he could never forget my action in the matter, etc., and left.

"I then wrote the following telegram to General Porter, which was sent to him by the General-in-Chief":

WASHINGTON, *September 1, 1862.*

MAJOR-GENERAL PORTER; I ask of you for my sake, and that of the country, and the old Army of the Potomac, that you and all my friends will lend the fullest and most cordial coöperation to General Pope in all the operations now going on. The destinies of our country, the honor of our army, are at stake, and all depends now upon the cheerful coöperation of all in the field. This week is the crisis of our fate. Say the same thing to my friends in the Army of the Potomac, and that the last request I have to make of them is, that for their country's sake they will extend to General Pope the same support they ever have to me.

I am in charge of the defenses of Washington, and am doing all I can to render your retreat safe, should that become necessary.

GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN.

PORTER'S REPLY.

FAIRFAX COURT-HOUSE, 10 A. M., *September 2, 1862.*

You may rest assured that all your friends, as well as every lover of his country, will ever give as they have given to General Pope their cordial coöperation and constant support, in the execution of all orders and plans. Our killed, wounded, and enfeebled troops attest our devoted duty.

F. J. PORTER.

It was, to use a familiar expression, very natural for the President to make this request, and equally natural for McClellan to comply with it, unnecessary as he knew it to be. At such a time, a man like McClellan could not stop to consider what implication he might leave to be made by his enemies and the enemies of his lieutenants, by sending such a dispatch to his friends in the Army of the Potomac. Porter's noble reply was characteristic. He knew that McClellan could not have volunteered to ask him to do his duty. It was just as plain to him that McClellan had been asked to send this dispatch as if the words "at the request of the President" had been written at the top of it. When Porter penned his answer,

he was surrounded by the proofs of what he and his officers and men had done ; but, alas ! these proofs were not at that moment visible at Washington, and, when the time for investigation came, the dark clouds of prejudice, passion, misconception, and misrepresentation shut out the truth. It was reserved to a better day and to discoveries almost providential, after long years of unmerited obloquy, to give to General Porter the most signal vindication that is recorded in the military annals of any nation.

After his interview with the President, in the afternoon of September 1st, General McClellan went to the house in Washington where his family then resided, and remained there that night. At half-past seven o'clock in the morning of the 2d, the door-bell rang, and the President and General Halleck were ushered into the parlor. They said that Colonel Kelton had returned and reported a great disaster ; that there were fifty thousand stragglers already on the roads leading into Washington, and that the city could not be saved. The President was deeply moved. He asked General McClellan if he was willing to take the command, *in that state of things*. McClellan expressed his willingness to take the command, and his belief that he could save the capital. Both Mr. Lincoln and General Halleck reiterated their fears that the enemy would enter the city. McClellan said he would stake his head on its safety. The President earnestly entreated him to take the command, and he assented without hesitation, without making a single condition or asking for a single promise of any kind. But what command did he then take ? The whole arrangement was verbal only, made in a moment of extreme peril. Not a scrap of written order was made when the President left General McClellan's house.

Here, therefore, we must again pause to consider the unselfish devotion of the man to whom this appeal was made, and to note the peculiar magnanimity of his conduct. We will not ask our readers to praise him for forgetting the injuries and indignities that he had received from every member of the Administration who had it in his power and was disposed to harm him. Patriotism can help even an ordinary man to separate his country from those who administer its affairs. But, when a general is placed in such a situation as that in which McClellan stood at that supreme moment, does not a rational and allowable regard for his own future demand that he make some provision for his own safety against the chances of war ? " Will you," asked Mr. Lincoln, in his distress—" will you, dare you, take the command in such a dangerous crisis ?" The

question was a considerate one. It was meant to bring to McClellan's mind the risk that he would run, and it was a kind and thoughtful act to remind him of it. The peril was instantly assumed by McClellan, without a thought concerning himself. But why did he not ask for a written order? If he had no selfish conditions to make, no promises to exact, why did he not ask for a written order, defining the command which the President wished him to take? It could have been written in three minutes. The question which we have asked is very important, for two reasons: That he did not stipulate for a written order, shows how little he was considering his own safety. Again, as will appear hereafter, his want of written orders from that time forth exposed him to perils far beyond the loss of reputation that would have followed his failure to save the capital from falling into the hands of the Confederates. Let him be blamed, if there are any who are disposed to blame him, for not exercising the average prudence of one who owes it to himself to be made as safe as, in a perilous enterprise, he can be. But let no generous and just person fail to see what he risked, or withhold from him the recognition of his extraordinary forgetfulness of himself when he had to confront a great danger for his country. That a written order defining McClellan's command could have been prepared on the spot, and that it must have been given if he had asked for it, can not be doubted. Both the President and the General-in-Chief knew that Pope had been beaten, very badly beaten, and that he could not be relied upon to save the capital. They knew that he was in full retreat, and that there was great disorder. Delicacy toward Pope, at such a moment, should not have restrained them from superseding him, or anybody else, by ordering McClellan to go to the front and assume the supreme command, if he had asked for such orders. Nor was there afterward any good reason, whether McClellan asked for them or not, for not giving him written orders defining his command and his duties, before he marched into Maryland, fought the battles of South Mountain and Antietam, and drove Lee back into Virginia. But we must return to our narrative.

When the President and General Halleck left General McClellan's house on the morning of September 2d, the latter immediately sent for his staff and got on horseback. He at once visited various points in and around the city, and made provisional arrangements for receiving and disposing of the troops. It was his intention to go to the front and take the command of the retreating army. But

in an hour or two a staff officer came to him from General Halleck with a message that he was not to go out and take the command, but that he was to wait the arrival of the troops just in front of the defenses of Washington. He then spent the morning in perfecting the arrangements for receiving the troops. The truth is, that many of the military and civil authorities in Washington at that moment believed the city to be in such peril that the President did not dare to permit McClellan to go beyond the immediate defenses of the capital. It was believed that the Government would have to fly, until McClellan's arrangements had, during that night, restored something like confidence to the officials and the inhabitants.

At about one o'clock on that day, McClellan rode out to Upton's Hill, three or four miles on the Virginia side of Washington. He arrived there between two and three o'clock. At this spot he met the first brigade of the retreating forces, somewhat in advance of the main body. Generals Pope and McDowell rode in the middle of a regiment of cavalry. General McClellan said to General Pope that he would relieve him of the command, and asked for information of the roads on which the different corps were then retreating. Nothing very satisfactory was obtained. At that point heavy artillery-firing was heard in the distance. General Pope said that the attack was on Sumner's corps. General McClellan asked if it was a severe attack, and General Pope replied that he thought it was. McClellan then said that he should go forward to the scene of this cannonading. Generals Pope and McDowell asked if they could go into Washington, and, on being informed that they could, they rode on. McClellan went forward with one aide and three orderlies across the country in the direction of the firing, to reach the troops engaged. He struck the column on the Lewinsville road, about six miles from Upton's Hill. At this point the first body of troops of the regular service recognized him, and instantly raised a great shout, which went down the lines for miles back. The men who did not see him inferred from the shouts of their comrades that he was again in command. Those who were about him insisted on his leading them back against the enemy. But no, it could not be; his orders restrained him. It was now evening, and darkness had settled down upon the landscape. McClellan pushed on toward Sumner's rear, and found that the firing had ceased; from which he concluded that Sumner's corps could reach in safety the position he had assigned for it. He then returned rapidly to Washington, and remained the greater

part of the night near the chain-bridge, receiving reports and giving orders. During that night the troops as they came in were posted, and the next day, the 3d, was spent by McClellan in rectifying their positions. During that day the enemy disappeared from the front of Washington, and McClellan's information satisfied him that he intended to cross the Upper Potomac into Maryland. "This," he says in his report, "materially changed the aspect of affairs, and enlarged the sphere of operations; for, in case of a crossing in force, an active campaign would be necessary to cover Baltimore, prevent the invasion of Pennsylvania, and clear Maryland." On the 3d McClellan reported to Halleck in person that he had sent forward the Second, Twelfth, and Ninth Corps to various positions on the roads north of Washington. Halleck asked who had been put in command of those corps. McClellan answered that he had designated no one to command them, but if there should be any necessity for them to act, in consequence of the enemy suddenly crossing the river, he would command them himself. Halleck replied that it had not been determined who should command the troops sent out from Washington. McClellan therefore rejoined that he would not assign any one to command those troops, but would look out for them himself. At least on two or three other occasions, Halleck repeated what he had said about the command of troops sent out from Washington as a thing not determined.

It is now necessary to return to the previous day, the 2d of September, the day on which the President and General Halleck ordered General McClellan to take command and save the capital. At some time during that day the following order emanated from the War Department :

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, *September 2, 1862.*

Major-General McClellan will have command of the fortifications of Washington, and of all the troops for the defense of the capital.

(By order of Major-General HALLECK.)

E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General.*

Construed by the existing state of things on that day, when it was expected that the fortifications of Washington would be immediately assailed by the enemy, the meaning of this order was plain. Construed by the state of things on the following day, when the enemy was moving north with an evident purpose to cross into Maryland above Washington, what did this order mean? Where

would *then* be the defense of Washington? Within its fortifications, or beyond them? What would be the "troops for the defense of the capital," with the command of which General McClellan had been invested? Strange to say, this was the only written order, defining McClellan's command, that ever proceeded from the War Department from that day until after McClellan had driven Lee across the Potomac. We have seen that General Halleck on the 3d did not consider the command of troops advancing beyond the immediate fortifications of Washington as settled; nor was it formally settled at any time thereafter until McClellan was displaced by Burnside. It was practically impossible for McClellan, while forwarding the troops, to busy himself with the settlement of the precise limits and scope of his command. He had consented, at the earnest entreaty of the President and General Halleck, to undertake for the safety of the capital.

The rapidly shifting scenes of this extraordinary drama, enlarging every hour the sphere of defensive operations until they would have to pass into offensive movements, left no time for McClellan to ask for more expanded orders. It was the duty of the Government to foresee and provide for the moment when he would have to go out of the fortified defenses of the city, and defend it and Baltimore and Pennsylvania by aggressive attacks on the advancing hosts of the Confederates. But for this they never provided, by written orders, defining McClellan's command. McClellan kept on for four days, making movements of the troops on the roads which led north from Washington. On the 7th, he ordered up his staff and escort and started for the head of the moving columns. But, before he rode out of Washington, he left his card as major-general for the President, the Secretary of State, and General Halleck. The President and General Halleck he saw. Halleck did not object to the movement of the troops. The President asked General McClellan if he had seen the Secretary of War, and begged him to do so as a personal favor. McClellan called upon Mr. Stanton, who received him with exuberant expressions of affection, said that he had always been McClellan's best friend, that bad men had made mischief between them, but that he should nevertheless always continue to support him cordially. Embracing the General with tenderness, Stanton bade him God-speed. But the General had not been gone from the War Department five minutes, when the Secretary spoke of him in terms of gross and shocking abuse.

Whether he trusted or distrusted the Secretary at that time, there was nothing for McClellan to do but to go forward and take the command. There was no one else who could take it—no one else who could handle that army. He could not stop to make conditions. He could think of but one thing—how to arrest the descent of Lee upon Washington, and to drive him back into Virginia. Shortly before the battle of South Mountain, which occurred on the 14th, General Lee was seated in his tent reading a dispatch that had been brought to him at that moment. General Longstreet, who was with him, asked for the news. "The worst possible news," said Lee ; "McClellan is again in command."

We do not propose to describe battles, the details of which are familiar to all who have read of them. One thing, however, is not to be overlooked. During the first five days that followed McClellan's return to active duty, there had been no time to properly complete the reëquipment of the troops which came pouring into Washington after Pope's defeat. All military persons know that whatever may be the spirit of an army, after such fighting, such a defeat, and such a retreat, to put it again in active and aggressive movement, with the proper material for long marches and encounters with the same foe, is a mighty work. The best that McClellan could do, before he marched out of Washington, was to restore in some degree the shattered organizations of the different corps, and to assign to them their lines of march. His movements northward had to be made carefully, so as not to uncover Washington before the enemy's position and plans were developed. But he was constantly impeded by General Halleck's cautions not to be too precipitate. On the 10th he learned from his scouts that Lee's army was probably in the vicinity of Frederick. On the 13th an order issued by General Lee on the 9th fell into McClellan's hands. It revealed the whole of Lee's plans. On the 14th the battle of South Mountain occurred, in which the Confederates were defeated, with a great loss in killed and wounded, and 1,500 prisoners were taken. The aggregate Federal loss was 1,568. On the following day, this dispatch came from the President to General McClellan :

WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON,
September 15, 1862—2.45 P. M.

Your dispatch of to-day received. God bless you, and all with you! Destroy the rebel army if possible.

A. LINCOLN.

To Major-General McCLELLAN.

General McClellan pressed forward his army in pursuit of the enemy, and on the 17th the long and desperately contested battle of Antietam, in which nearly the whole of the troops on both sides were actively engaged, ended in the defeat of the Confederates. On the night of the 18th the Confederate army recrossed the Potomac into Virginia, leaving 2,700 of their dead unburied on the field. Thirteen guns, thirty-nine colors, upward of fifteen thousand stand of small-arms, and more than six thousand prisoners, were captured by the Federals in the three battles of South Mountain, Crampton's Gap, and Antietam, without losing a single gun or a single color. The grand aggregate of the Federal killed, wounded, and missing, in the battle of Antietam was 12,469. The total number of the Federal forces was 87,164 men. The enemy had about 10,000 more.

On the night after the battle of Antietam, McClellan anxiously deliberated whether he should pursue the enemy. If he had done so, and had lost the next battle, Lee could have marched as he pleased on Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York. Nowhere east of the Alleghanies was there another organized force that could have arrested his march through an undevastated country, levying tribute as he went from populous and wealthy cities. It would not do for McClellan to risk another battle with less than absolute assurance of success. The elements of even a probable assurance of success were entirely wanting. The troops were overcome by the fatigue and exertion of the prolonged and severe battle of the 17th, and the day and night marches of the three previous days. The supply-trains were in the rear, and the troops had suffered from hunger. They required rest and refreshment. The means of transportation, if the troops had been pushed across the Potomac, were inadequate to furnish a single day's supply of subsistence in advance. Ten general officers and many regimental and company officers, and a great number of the enlisted men, had been killed or disabled. Above all, it should not be forgotten that this army which had, under McClellan, thus fought and won these two sanguinary battles, was the same army that had come back to Washington disheartened by the defeat which it had suffered under General Pope, and that many of its organized bodies had left behind, lost, or worn out the greater part of their clothing and camp equipage, which required renewal before they could be in a suitable condition again to take the field. General McClellan, therefore, properly determined that the army should rest and be refitted.

But now there broke forth from all the organs of the Administration the bitterest reproaches of McClellan and accusations of his slowness and inefficiency. Why did he not pursue Lee? Why did he not follow up the advantages he had gained? Hesitation, too much deliberation, a total want of "dash"—these were his supposed failings. The people of the North did not know, or did not heed, the fact, that McClellan held no orders but that one which had invested him with the command of the troops for the defense of Washington. It was only by acting on the military principle of offensive-defensive war that he could lead his army sixty or seventy miles from Washington in aggressive attacks upon Lee. When he had reached the Potomac and driven Lee beyond it, his order, upon the broadest construction, was exhausted. But, while a senseless clamor was incessantly dinned into the public ear, General McClellan was constantly occupied in reorganizing, drilling, and endeavoring to supply his army, and in watching and guarding all the passes of the river for a long distance. While this was going on, the President determined to make a visit to the army, and to learn for himself the real state of affairs. He arrived at General McClellan's headquarters on the 1st of October, and remained there three days. He rode over the field and made himself fully acquainted with the details of the battle. To several of General McClellan's officers he expressed in the strongest terms his thanks for what had been done, spoke of McClellan with great praise, and said that his confidence in him was entire. On the last day of his visit he had a long conversation with McClellan himself. They sat together on a rock in the neighborhood of the General's tent, some of the staff standing near. The President said to McClellan that the only fault he had ever had to find with him was that he was too "slow"; that he had thought so heretofore, but that he now saw his mistake; that he was the only General in the service who could handle a large army; that he had his absolute and entire confidence; that he must go on and do what he thought right—move when he was ready, and not before—and, when he moved, do as he thought best; that he must make his mind easy, that he should not be removed from the command, and that he should have his (Mr. Lincoln's) full and unqualified support. The President had seen the destitute condition of the army, and promised that it should be remedied as quickly as practicable. He then went away.

It appears to us that the President, after his return to Washing-

ton, continued for a short time to be as firm in his support of McClellan as it was in his nature to be in regard to anything. But the bad influences soon began to work anew; and Mr. Lincoln apparently did not fortify himself against those influences, by making known to the members of his Cabinet who were unfriendly to McClellan the pledges that he had given on the field of Antietam. On the 6th of October, about three days after Mr. Lincoln's return, General Halleck sent the following dispatch, which General McClellan received on the 7th :

WASHINGTON, D. C., *October 6, 1862.*

MAJOR-GENERAL MCCLELLAN: I am instructed to telegraph you as follows: The President directs that you cross the Potomac and give battle to the enemy, or drive him south. Your army must move now, while the roads are good. If you cross the river between the enemy and Washington, and cover the latter by your operations, you can be reënforced with thirty thousand men. If you move up the valley of the Shenandoah, not more than twelve or fifteen thousand can be sent to you. The President advises the interior line between Washington and the enemy, but does not order it. He is very desirous that your army move as soon as possible. You will immediately report what line you adopt, and when you intend to cross the river. Also to what point the reënforcements are to be sent. It is necessary that the plan of your operations be positively determined on before orders are given for building bridges and repairing railroads. I am directed to add that the Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief fully concur with the President in these instructions.

H. W. HALLECK, *General-in-Chief.*

This order was, of course, entirely inconsistent with what the President had said to McClellan only three or four days previously—that he was to move when he was ready and not before. But the order is to be explained by the “pressure” of which Mr. Lincoln often spoke, and which was constantly brought to bear upon him whenever and wherever McClellan was concerned. The last sentence of the dispatch shows the quarter from which the pressure came. The Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief had persuaded the President to speak in this order as if he did not intend to leave General McClellan to act on his own judgment as the President had voluntarily promised to do. The whole occurrence is a strong illustration of the folly of giving such orders to a general in the field who must know whether his army is in a condition to march into the enemy's country better than his government at home, unless he is entirely unfit for his place. If he is, he should be at once superseded. If he is not unfit for his position, his judgment

should be followed, and everything should be done for him that is needful. As we proceed, we shall adduce not only the old but some entirely new and conclusive proof that General McClellan was right, and that the Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief were wrong.

At the time of the receipt of this dispatch of the 6th, notwithstanding the appearance of a peremptory direction to march which the Secretary and the General-in-Chief had infused into its words, it is apparent from the context that something was left to General McClellan's discretion as to the line of movement, and that the President could not be persuaded to make the order peremptory in this particular. Moreover, General McClellan had to construe this order by the solemn assurance that Mr. Lincoln had given him, only a few days before, that he should not be required to move on the enemy before he was ready. Whether he was to invade Virginia by either of the two lines indicated in the order, the fact of his being or not being in a condition to make an aggressive movement into the enemy's country remained exactly as it in truth was. The condition of his army was a most essential element in the problem, by whatever line he was to move. That condition had not changed in the three days that elapsed from the time when the President himself saw what it was ; and, as we go on, we shall show that it had not so materially changed, for three weeks after the date of this order, that the army could have been safely marched upon a new and aggressive campaign in the enemy's country.

General McClellan fought the battles of South Mountain and Antietam without any written order defining his command, excepting the ambiguous one of September 2d—ambiguous, that is to say, after the date on which it was issued from the War Department. What, then, would have been his fate if he had lost those battles, and especially the last ? We must carry the reader back to a period when mean rivalries, deep hatreds, and vengeful prejudices had their sway. It can not be doubted that, if McClellan had been defeated in the battle of Antietam, he would have had to answer for it before a court-martial, and that his blood would have been demanded. We know what deeds were done in that period under the forms and mockeries of military justice. McClellan's bitterest enemies were among those who, from their official stations, would have had the power, which they would not have scrupled to use, to arraign him for having assumed a command to which he had not been legally assigned. They could have pointed to the narrow scope of the order of September 2d, and they would have pointed to the

lives of brave men that had been lost and the public property that had been destroyed beyond what, they would have contended, was the scope of the only authority that he had received which could avail him as a legal order. In suffering McClellan to be thus exposed, President Lincoln would seem to have been unconscious of what a strain might be brought upon his own sense of executive justice if any disaster should befall the General who had taken the command at his earnest personal entreaty, and who had been left without a proper legal authority for the acts which he was expected to perform. Beyond all doubt it would have cost Mr. Lincoln the deepest pain if any misfortune had exposed one hair of McClellan's head to any danger. At the base of Mr. Lincoln's statue which stands in the heart of this metropolis, and is passed every day by half a million of people, there is inscribed a legend which imputes to him that he had "charity for all, malice toward none." We may believe that the ascription is just. But what would Mr. Lincoln's amiable qualities have availed against the hatreds, the machinations, and the devices of McClellan's enemies if he had not been victorious in the battles which he fought without other than an implied authority for fighting them? When McClellan overtook and gave battle to the enemy on the field of Antietam, he may without exaggeration be said to have twice taken his life in his hand.*

G. T. C.

* General McClellan was under fire during the battle of Antietam several times, and on each occasion for a considerable period, and with great exposure. His duties required him to expose himself both to artillery and infantry fire, at many critical periods of the day. At one time, he rode along the lines for the very purpose of drawing the fire of a supposed concealed battery, in order to reveal its position. It opened upon him and his staff as soon as they were within range.